

COS 221: Bible II: Torah, and Israel's History

Syllabus and Pre-Course Assignments

Appalachian Local Pastors School

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Instructor:

Dr. Rodney K. Duke

Dept. of Philosophy and Religion

Appalachian State University

Boone, NC 28608

828-262-3091 (o) or 828-264-1336 (h)

E-mail: dukerk@appstate.edu

Please feel free to communicate with me.

COS Catalog Statement

This course interprets the critical events, developing institutions, and traditions of Israel. Attention is given to the earliest Covenants, to the Exodus, to the rise of the monarchy, and to other events up to the eighth century prophets.

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate a historical overview of the experience and faith of ancient Israel.
2. Exegete selected passages that illustrate crucial turning points in the history of Israel.
3. Apply exegesis to preaching, other pastoral responsibilities, and issues of the present day.

Instructor Statement of Objectives

The objectives of the independent-study assignments are for the student to gain an overview of the historical events, traditions and faith of Israel, with its developing institutions; to gain an overview of the content of the Old Testament, with a particular focus on historical narratives and legal literature; and to come to a fuller appreciation of the value of the Old Testament for Christian faith and practice. A more focused objective of the weeklong class session will be for the students to gain interpretative skills for reading, comprehending, and applying the narrative and legal literature of the Old Testament in their ministry contexts.

Comment on Workload

The assignments below would be equivalent to a little more than one half of what would be required for a one-semester, undergraduate course in college. Allow about 2 hours per assignment. I strongly advise you to schedule your time by dividing this work up into a period of at least several weeks, and that you work through it gradually, methodically, and thoughtfully. It will be most difficult to try to read and respond to all of the assignments, if you begin just a few weeks before these assignments are due. More importantly, you will not gain as much from the assignments. I encourage you to start early, to do only one or two assignments a week, and to try to use something from each assignment for your sermon/teaching ministry, so that this study time complements your normal work load rather than adding to it.

COS Textbooks:

Required:

Collins, John J. *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible: Second Edition*. Fortress Press, 2014.

Fretheim, Terence E. *The Pentateuch*. Interpreting Biblical Texts. Abingdon, 1996.

Bible. I will generally use the New International Version (NIV) in class, so it is the preferred version; but, any modern translation – not paraphrase -- will be acceptable.

Recommended for reference:

Oxford Bible Atlas. [Duke: note that you can find good electronic Bible map software as well.]

Assignments

(Due April 1)

General Assignment Instructions (Read and follow the directions carefully!)

Signed Cover Sheet

I only need one signed ALPS cover sheet for all of the assignments collectively, not one for each assignment.

Copies:

Please make a copy of your assignment responses to bring to ALPS, in case they get lost in the mail.

Assignment Headings

On all assignments identify the assignment number and use the two body subheadings, “Challenges” and “Application.” (See Paper Template below.)

Textbook Readings and Writing Assignments

All textbooks have their strengths and weaknesses and all authors have their own working assumptions and methodologies. Therefore, one component of the assignments will be to ask you to think carefully about the positions taken in the textbooks, as you should do for any textbook. Under “Challenges” you are asked to identify one or two issues in the content of the textbook. (See “Paper Template” below.) You do not have to agree with the author.

However, one of the COS goals is for this course to aid you practically in preaching and ministry. Therefore, under “Application” you are asked to focus on what is relevant and applicable for you in ministry. (See “Paper Template” below.)

When we meet for class in May, we will not focus much on the content found in the textbook. We will focus on how to read biblical narrative and legal literature for greater comprehension.

The assignments in the textbooks will consist of reading a chapter or sections in a chapter and writing one-page papers. One of the purposes of the assignments is to help you to develop the skill of communicating your thoughts clearly in writing. **Therefore, all written assignments are to be written as if you are writing to a reader who knows nothing about**

the assignment prompt or the Old Testament or the assignment. You are to explain your answers and thoughts clearly and succinctly in formal written English with complete sentences and correct grammar. You may wish to ask a friend to read your responses and to analyze them for their clarity of communication. Also, feel free to send your first assignment attempt or two to me for feedback, before you go on to complete the assignments. Following the paper format and template are necessary for a good grade.

Paper Format

- Audience: Write clearly as to peers who are not familiar with the OT and who have not read the assignments and questions and not as if writing to me. You want an outside reader to be able to understand you.
- Form: At least one **typed** page for each paper, double spaced, 12-point font, one and a quarter inch margins. (Approx. 250 words/page).
- Style: Rather formal. You may be personal and use 1st person, but these papers are not to be conversational journals or blogs! Try to avoid idioms, slang, contractions, or abbreviations - except standard biblical notation.
- General objective: These papers are to be a tool that you create for later use. After you have forgotten the details in the textbook, you ought to be able to reread your papers and regain/refresh your memory over the important points.

Paper Template for Papers #3-17

(Heading)

Assignment #:

Chapter/section # in textbook:

(Body consists of two sections)

Challenges:

(One half to two thirds of your response. In this section identify, discuss, and maybe raise questions to pursue about issues in the reading that you found to be interesting, challenging, confusing, or worth investigating more. Do not retell or summarize the content. I am looking for thoughtful interaction.)

Application:

(One third to one half of your response. In this section identify and discuss how you can or will apply one or two points of learning or reflection in your ministry; that is something that applied to you spiritually or something that you can preach, teach or use in counseling. For example, you might write out a main point and a sermon/teaching outline.) Be specific.

Paper Topics (#1-18):

#1 Read Chapter 1 of *The Pentateuch* by Fretheim and write a one-page response paper. This chapter presents brief guide to interpreting the Pentateuch (in fact, the Bible). I want you to focus particularly on what he says about considering the world behind the text, the world within the text, and the world in front of the text.

#2 Read Chapter 2 of *The Pentateuch* by Fretheim and write a one-page response paper. This chapter develops more on the implied reader, on how to read the Pentateuch, and on some major themes in these first five books of the OT. I want you to focus on how what Fretheim says could helpfully shape your reading of the Pentateuch. (The Fretheim book is a required textbook. I am requiring only the first couple of chapter be read, but will give extra credit if you wish to read the other chapters and write responses for them.)

#18 **(Read these instructions now.)** Genesis 12 builds on the prologue that is provided by Genesis 1-11 and provides the “spectacles” for viewing the rest of the Old Testament. In Gen. 1-11, after humanity became totally corrupt, God started again with the flood and Noah. At the end of Gen. 11, we are left with humanity again being totally corrupt. A good Israelite audience would expect that God was going to start all over again. God does so with the call of Abram/Abraham in Chapt. 12. Read Gen 12. Note the promises that God makes and note how the main purpose of these promises is so that other people will be blessed. As you read the following sections in the Collins textbook for papers #3-17 – and I urge you to read the corresponding biblical books – keep these spectacles on and constantly be asking, “How does my knowledge about the call of Abraham influence my understanding of Israelite history and literature?” After finishing the 17th reading and paper, write a one-page response paper (#18) on how the “spectacles” of Genesis 12 (the promises to Abraham) influenced your understanding of Israelite history and literature.

#3-17 The rest of the readings are from Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible: Second Edition* and follow the paper template of “Challenges” and “Application.”

3. Introduction
4. Chapt. 1 The Near Eastern Context
5. Chapt. 2 The Nature of the Pentateuchal Narrative
6. Chapt. 3 The Primeval History
7. Chapt. 4 The Patriarchs
8. Chapt. 5 The Exodus from Egypt
9. Chapt. 6 The Revelation at Sinai
10. Chapt. 7 The Priestly Theology ...
11. Chapt. 8 Deuteronomy
12. Chapt. 9 Joshua
13. Chapt. 10 Judges
14. Chapt. 11 1 Samuel
15. Chapt. 12 2 Samuel
16. Chapt. 13 1 Kings 1-16 ...
17. Chapt. 14 1 Kings 17 – 2 King 25 ...

[Remember to go back and do #18, described above.]